

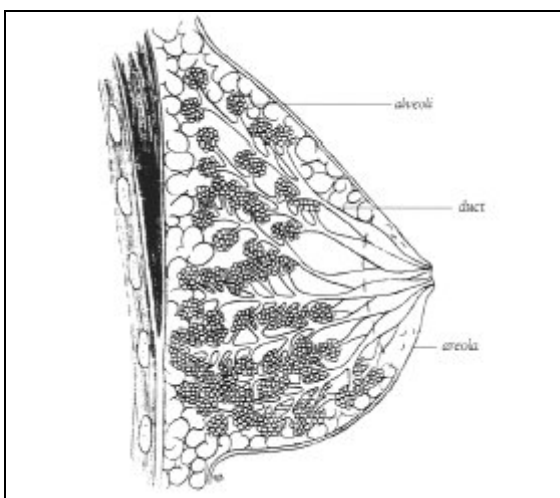
Breastfeeding Answers

How do I use a breast pump?

Like breastfeeding, pumping is a learned skill. Most mothers are able to express only a few drops of milk when they first try a breast pump. With practice and knowledge of how the breast works, the mother will soon be more efficient at pumping.

No matter what method of pumping is used, the success of pumping depends on the body's ability to "let-down" to the pump. Some times if mother don't see milk immediately after beginning pumping, they start to pump harder or increase the suction with the mistaken idea that more pressure will "pull" the milk out. Doing this can cause discomfort and anxiety and actually discourage the let-down response. Understanding how the let-down works makes understanding pumping easier.

The let-down reflex releases milk from the back of the breast into the ducts to make it available to baby or the pump. As the nerves in the nipple and areola are stimulated by baby's sucking or the action of the pump, the pituitary gland receives a signal to release prolactin and oxytocin into mother's blood stream. Prolactin relaxes the mother and stimulates the alveoli to produce more milk. Oxytocin causes the alveoli to contract and squeezes milk into the ducts.



Preparing the breast pump

- Read the instruction sheet in the kit carefully.
- All parts of the pump need to be sterilized before the first use.
- After each use, all parts of the pump need to be washed in warm, soapy water, rinsed with hot water and drained on a clean towel. Plastic tubing does not need to be cleaned unless milk gets into it. If washed, it should be hung to allow it to drain and dry thoroughly.
- If your doctor feel it's necessary, the entire kit can be sterilized daily according to the instructions included with the pump.
- When beginning with a full service electric pump, the suction level should be on minimum. Since each women has a different level, the level may then be gradually increased to what is comfortable for her.

Getting started

- Warm compresses, gentle breast massage and gentle nipple stimulation will help stimulate a quicker let-down.
- Relax while doing breast massage and during pumping. Some mothers close their eyes and think about nursing the baby, imagining the baby in their arms. Many mothers use a picture of their baby to focus their thoughts. The more relaxed a mother is, the better let-down she will have and the more milk will be expressed.
- The first attempts at pumping should be considered practice sessions with learning to use the pump as a goal, not how much milk is expressed. In these early sessions, it is normal to get a very small quantity of milk, especially if you are learning with a hand, battery or small electric pump. Pumps that allow you to nurse on one side while pumping have the advantage of using the body's natural response to let down the milk for the baby.

- When using a hand pump, short pluses at the start of the pumping is especially stimulating and imitates more closely the way a baby imitates breastfeeding. Once the let-down occurs and milk is flowing freely, long, steadier strokes are effective and less tiring.
- When learning to pump, practice for 5 minutes on a side once or twice a day. Pick the least stressful part of your day for pumping. A good time for many mothers is about one hour after the baby's first morning feeding. Most women tend to have more milk earlier in the day.
- When pumping one side at a time, alternating breasts several times during expression is more stimulating and can result in a higher volume of milk. Double pumping can save time and may result in a better stimulation of prolactin
- Drinking enough fluid and getting adequate rest are important. Getting into the habit of having something to drink each time a mother sits down to pump is a good way to ensure she has adequate fluid intake. It is best to limit daily intake of caffeine containing drinks since excessive caffeine can cause some babies to be wakeful.

Helpful hints

- Many pumps provide inserts that fit into the shield portion of the breast pump or accessory kit. These inserts allow the mother to choose a size of breast shield that feels more comfortable for her. Some experts recommend using both sizes during pumping (5 minutes on both sides with smaller insert; five minutes with larger shield; continue switching until milk is expressed). Doing this stimulates different parts of the areola and may help expression.
- The length of time spent pumping varies with each woman and with each day. Expect to spend about as much time pumping as your baby does nursing. Using a double pumping system can cut this time in half.
- Frequency of pumping depends on the situation. If the baby is sick and not breastfeeding at all, pump 6-8 times a day. If the baby is nursing, it may be necessary to pump once for every 3-4 hours away from the baby. The younger the baby is, the more frequently pumping will be necessary. In any circumstances, becoming overfull is to be avoided.
- If large amounts of milk are not expressed while pumping, don't worry about the amount of milk your baby gets when breastfeeding. No pump expresses milk as well as a baby does.
- A young breastfed baby usually needs to nurse every 2-3 hours. It is best to pump on the same schedule. The more the breasts are stimulated, the more milk is produced. Mothers can feel free to sleep a longer period at night.

Relaxing and realizing that the pump is a friend is the most important thing the mother can do. There are many things mothers can do to help themselves relax such as: putting a picture of baby on the pump; play cards or a game with her mate or friend; watch television; read a book; talk on the phone. Watching the milk collection bottle is not helpful.

Easing the transition to the breast for the sick baby

- Mother and baby need lots of time together for holding and cuddling. Baby needs to get to know the breast as a warm wonderful place to be.
- Expectations need to be realistic. Baby will start nursing gradually and gain skill with practice.
- If baby was pre mature or low birth weight, he will become more interested in sucking as he gets closer to the originally expected due date or birth weight.
- Each baby takes to the breast at his own pace. As baby nurses more, supplementation and pumping can gradually be dropped. The person from whom the pump is rented may be able to help, or can refer the mother to a breastfeeding counselor.